

A Banded Slate Tubular Bannerstone from Belmont County, Ohio

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While conducting a Phase II archaeological survey in Wheeling Township, Belmont County, Ohio, in late March of this year, the author discovered the banded slate tubular bannerstone illustrated in Figure 1.

The survey area consisted of an approximately 256 acre tract to be stripped for coal by the Bannock Coal Company, of Lafferty, Ohio. A related Phase I literature survey revealed no record of archaeological sites in the project area, which consists essentially of two adjacent ridgetops separated by a small stream valley that has previously been strip mined. The project area is located in Section 1 of Wheeling Township, a short distance west of Uniontown.

The ridgetops in the project area were for the most part very well exposed, mostly in last years crops but with very little weed cover. A combination of intensive surface survey and selected shovel testing revealed only one readily definable site—a moderate scatter of flint chippage, two end scrapers on unifacial blades, the non-diagnostic mid-section of an elongate bifacial blade, and the base of a Brewerton Corner-Notched point (Fig. 2). All of these were made of Upper Mercer flint, except for the smaller endscraper, which was made on a flake of light Vanport (Flint Ridge) flint. By way of contrast, the unutilized chippage from the Bannock I Site (33-BI-62) consisted almost entirely of Flint Ridge flint (28 flakes, core or block shatter fragments), with only 1 flake of Upper Mercer flint and one block shatter fragment of local Fishpot fresh-water chert (Murphy 1976). The site is inter-

preted as a transient Late Archaic campsite or ephemeral retooling area.

Following completion of the field survey, the author was cutting across an abandoned farm site just outside the project area and stopped to check an ash heap and adjacent debris for Historic ceramics when he discovered the slate bannerstone (Fig. 1). At first glance it looked like a wooden pail or bucket handle, but its true character was recognized as it was picked up.

The slate tube measures 124 mm long with a maximum diameter of 27.6 mm at one end and tapering to 16.4 mm at the smaller end. One side of the bannerstone is considerably flattened, as is typical of tubular and ball bannerstones. The tube is fire-reddened on one side at the larger end, where a 2 cm chip has spalled off.

The artifact clearly dates to the Archaic, and probably specifically to the Late Archaic. Converse (1971: 4) notes the occurrence of this artifact type in the Glacial Kame culture. He also provides a distribution map for tubular bannerstones in Ohio, and the addition of a few more records published since 1971 does little to change the apparent distribution. Such artifacts are unknown outside the glaciated portion of the state, which may be either a direct function of the general unavailability of banded slate away from glacial tills and outwash gravels or a product of the lack of collecting. Belmont County, in any case, lies well outside the glacial boundary, and the closest source of banded slate would be the Ohio River gravels.

One problem with the provenience

of this bannerstone is its discovery in recent Historic contexts. The artifact was found within a small rectangular area delimited by four sandstone foundation stones that apparently represent the site of a coal shed or small outbuilding, so that it is entirely possible that the bannerstone was at one time part of a farmer's collection and was subsequently lost or discarded. If this is the case, the bannerstone need not necessarily have been found in the immediate area. Although the likelihood of a Belmont County farmer actively collecting artifacts very far afield seems unlikely, this is a point that can probably never be settled.

Acknowledgements

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References

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Fig. 1 (Murphy) Banded slate tubular bannerstone, Wheeling Township, Belmont County, Ohio.



Fig. 2 (Murphy) Brewerton corner notched base, two unifacial end scrapers (smaller of Flint Ridge flint), and point fragment, Bannock I Site, Wheeling Township, Belmont County, Ohio.